

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O R 211612Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1766

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2418

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (UPGRADED TO EXDIS PER STATE 231059)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (BUTZ, EARL)

SUBJ: VISIT BY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE TO CAIRO AND DAMASCUS

REF: STATE 230737

1. WELCOME PROSPECT OF VISIT BY SECRETARY BUTZ, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OUR HOPES DEVELOP CLOSE TIES BETWEEN US AND SYRIAN AGRICULTURAL SECTORS.

2. PRIOR TO INFORMING SARG OF PROPOSED VISIT TO DAMASCUS OF SECRETARY BUTZ, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 11, 12 AND 13, WE REQUEST DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON FOLLOWING FACTOR WHICH WILL HAVE IMPORTANT BEARING ON SUCCESS OF PROPOSED VISIT:

AS NOTED REFTEL, PURPOSE OF VISIT TO DAMASCUS WOULD BE TO DEMONSTRATE EQUALITY OF STATUS WITH WHICH WE VIEW EGYPT AND SYRIA. WE WONDER WHETHER SYRIANS MAY NOT CONCLUDE JUST THE OPPOSITE AFTER LEARNING THAT SECRETARY BUTZ DISCUSSED PL-480 WITH GOE AND CARRIED THROUGH AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES ON PL-480 AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT FOR CONSIDERABLE QUANTITIES OF US AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES. SUCH DISCUSSIONS AND AGREEMENT WILL BE WIDELY PUBLICIZED IN
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MIDDLE EAST PRESS AND RADIO PRIOR TO SECRETARY BUTZ' ARRIVAL

IN SYRIA. BY CONTRAST, STATUS OF USG/SARG PL-480 AGREEMENT PRESENTLY UNKNOWN AT LEAST TO THIS EMBASSY. NOR APPARENTLY CAN WASHINGTON PREDICT WHAT STATUS WILL BE AT TIME OF SECRETARY BUTZ' VISIT. (AS NOTED IN STATE 230309, PROPOSED SUBJECTS TO BE DISCUSSED WITH SYRIANS DURING LATE OCTOBER/EARLY NOVEMBER VISIT OF AID ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR NOOTER PROVIDE FOR HIS BRIEFING ONLY THIS EMBASSY ON LATEST INFO RE PL-480 STATUS.) WE FORESEE DANGER OF INVIDIOUS COMPARISON BY SYRIANS CONTRASTING US ATTITUDE TOWARD UAR AND SYRIA IN WAY DIRECTLY COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO INTENT OF VISIT. FOR THIS REASON, USG SHOULD BE READY TALK TURKEYHAND, IDEALLY, SIGN SOME TYPE OF PL-480 COMMITMENT BEFORE OR DURING SECRETARY BUTZ' VISIT, OTHERWISE VISIT BY THIS HIGH-LEVEL US CABINET OFFICIAL TO SYRIA RISKS BEING PREMATURE.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: ADVISE MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ON STATUS OF PL-480 FOR SYRIA AND PROSPECTS FOR REACHING ACCORD BEFORE OR DURING PROPOSED VISIT BY SECRETARY BUTZ. MURPHY

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